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PEEPS AT MANY LANDS

WALES

BY

E. M. WILMOT-BUXTON
F.R.Hist.S.
AUTHOR OF "BRITAIN LONG AGO," ETC.

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INTRODUCTION

These peeps at Wales will take us into a country busy with its various industries of coal-mining, slate-quarrying, and wool manufacture, yet one which, in spite of its modern developments and trade interests, has never lost the magic and glamour of an earlier age.

Every country-town, almost every hill and mound in the district, has its legend, its romance, which lives in the hearts of an intensely patriotic and imaginative people, and blends the past and the present into one.

This is the reason why, in these peeps at various spots in Wales, we have often chosen those unknown to the tourist, but interesting to those who care for the people as well as for the place, because of some legend or history that paints, as nothing else can do, their life in the days of old.

Romance broods over all : the spell of the wizard Merlin has touched vale and hill ; Arthur and his Round Table, though belonging originally to the sister-country of Brittany, has migrated hither and left his name and those of his Knights in every part of the land ; Taliesin, the marvellous child-bard, still sings beyond the mountain-peaks.

The actual history of Wales, too, stained with blood though it often is, has its romance as well; for what can be more romantic than the hopeless struggle for a lost cause as carried on by the last Llewelyn and by the brave Glendower?

By its many "caers," or forts, its ruined castles, its well-made roads, it speaks of a history of constant struggle and rebellion against superior forces—the struggle of the Celt against the Saxon, the rebellion of the freeborn against the conqueror.

Some of this history, some of these traditions, we shall read in these pages as we visit the places with which they are connected; and because of these we shall have to turn our backs upon many a spot, better known and more frequented than those we have chosen, but, perhaps, for that very reason, less interesting, since, owing to the crowds of English tourists which beset them, they have lost much of their Celtic character.

And let not those of us who "have no Welsh" be daunted by the apparent difficulty of pronouncing the names of these places. A Welshman will tell you that his language is "phonetic"—that is, pronounced exactly as it is spelt! Nor is this rule misleading if we will but bear in mind that *dd* is sounded like the English *th* in *breathe*, that *ff* is *f*, and *f* is *v*. *W* is sounded like *oo*; *y* is *u* if it comes early in the word, and *i* if later; *aw* is *ow*; and *ll* is best pronounced, on one authority, by pressing the tongue against the front teeth and breathing hard.

E. M. W.-B.

WALES

CHAPTER I

WILD WALES

Once upon a time, says a famous Welsh legend, a certain witch named Caridwen set to work to brew a cauldron of knowledge that might make her youngest son the wisest man in the world. Now, this cauldron had to boil for a year and a day, and at the end of that time it would yield three drops of precious liquid which would make whoever drank them the wisest of all men. So she set a passing tramp named Gwion Bach to stir the cauldron and to keep it on the boil, and made up her mind to kill him directly the time was up, lest he should learn the secret of the magic liquid.

But she miscalculated the time, and so it happened that one day, in her absence, the three magic drops flew up out of the cauldron and fell upon the finger of Gwion Bach. Feeling his finger thus scalded, he put it to his mouth and sucked it, and immediately he became very wise, and knew what Caridwen meant to do to him.

So he fled to his own people, and the cauldron, left unstirred, burst in two, so that the poisonous liquid that was left, poured out and flowed into a stream near by, and all the cattle that drank of that stream went mad and died.

When Caridwen saw this, she made haste to catch Gwion Bach and put him to death; but he, when he saw her running after him, changed himself into a hare, for the magic potion had given him skill of all kinds. But she immediately turned herself into a greyhound, and had nearly caught him, when he sprang into a river and changed himself into a fish. Then she became an otter, and chased him till, hard pressed, he took the form of a bird. Caridwen then became a hawk, and chased him till, dead-beat, he fell into a granary and changed himself into a grain of wheat. The witch promptly became a high-crested black hen, and scratched among the grains till she found him. She was about to swallow him, when he, now almost at the end of his resources, became a beautiful little child. Then Caridwen, not having the heart to kill him, put him into a leathern bag and cast him into the sea, not far from Aberystwith, just below the Weir of Gwyddno, on April 29.

Now, Gwyddno had a most unlucky son named Elphin, who was "always needing and never getting"; and in order that he might gain some-

thing for himself, his father granted him all the weir should contain on May-day. So the nets were set, but in the morning they were quite empty save for a leathern bag which had caught in one of them. Then said one of his companions : " Till this day, the weir has been worth a hundred pounds' worth of fish every May morning. Now see how your luck has turned them away, and left you nothing but a skin."

" Nay," said Elphin ; " perhaps the skin bag may have something in it that is worth more than a hundred pounds."

So they opened it, and a little lad peeped out.

" See what a bright face !" they cried. And Elphin, heavy with disappointment, said, " Let him be called Taliesin, then " (which means Bright Face), and took him home behind him on his horse. But as they rode along the boy began to sing to him so sweet a song of consolation that Elphin marvelled, and asked where he had learnt a thing so beautiful. Then Taliesin replied that, though he was but little, he was, nevertheless, very wise. When they reached the house, Gwyddno asked his son if he had had a good haul. " Father," replied Elphin, " I have caught a poet-minstrel."

" Alas ! What good will that do thee ?" asked his father ; but Taliesin answered for himself : " It will do him more good than the weir ever did for thee !"

And so it came about; for Taliesin, the magic child, not only saved Elphin's life and liberty when he was in great danger and made him a rich and fortunate man; he also brought high fame to the House of Gwyddno by his very name and connection with it. For Taliesin, the rest of whose wonderful story must be read elsewhere, became the minstrel, and bard, and prophet of the Britain of old days; and this was one of his prophecies made concerning the people of his land:

> "Their Lord they shall praise,
> Their language they shall keep,
> Their land they shall lose
> Except Wild Wales."

Let us see how the prophecy has been fulfilled.

When the Romans conquered Britain, they found the hardest part of their task lay in that north-western part of the island which is now called Wales. The people were more uncivilized than the Britons of the south-east, but they knew how to fight to the death; and the Roman writer paints for us a vivid picture of the grim lines of warriors, urged on by the cries of wild women dancing a witch-dance in the van, and by the words of the white-robed, ivy-crowned Druids, who called down the curses of the sky-god upon the Roman foe.

Even when this part of Britain at length was subdued, the inhabitants were very little influenced

by their conquerors. They used the fine Roman roads laid down for the passage of their conquerors' troops from Caerleon to Chester and along the coast; they marvelled at the pretty Roman villas that arose upon their borders; but they kept their own language and their own customs, and were influenced scarcely at all by the civilization which was spreading fast in the south and east of Britain. One thing, however, they eagerly embraced, and that was the Christian faith, and that is one reason why many Welsh words connected with the religious services of the Church are merely Latin words in disguise.

When the rest of Britain, at the end of the fifth century, had fallen into the hands of the English invaders and conquerors, the western part remained free. High among their mountains, these fierce tribes bade defiance to Angle, and Saxon, and Jute, and to them came for protection many of those who had been forced to flee for their lives from other parts of Britain. From that time this region came to be known by the English as *Wales*, the Land of Strangers; and thus was part of the prophecy concerning the whole people of Britain fulfilled:

> "*Their land they shall lose*
> *Except Wild Wales.*"

"*Their language they shall keep.*" We have seen how few Latin words had been borrowed from the

Romans, and now that all the rest of the island was fast forgetting its original tongue and learning the language of its conquerors, the men of the West were fulfilling that part of the prophecy also. Up to this time there had been in the land three distinct races, and at least three languages. There were the short, dark-haired Celts, who came originally from the South of Europe, and who became the serfs of the next new-comers, the Irish Celts. These were tall, red-haired people, and very like them were the next to come, the Brythons, or Welsh Celts. While the English were making themselves masters of the rest of Britain, these two latter tribes were at civil war, and in the end the Brythons, or Britons, got the upper hand, and their language became the language of Wales.

It was about this time, too, that the first line of the bardic prophecy began to be fulfilled. Under the stirring influence of Dewi, the Water-drinker, the monk of Dyfed, whom we know as St. David, Wales became caught up in a wave of religious zeal. Monasteries were built, missionaries travelled from end to end of the country, everywhere the Gospel was preached, and the people received it gladly. Countless Welsh "saints," or missionaries, arose, whose names are now only remembered by the churches or places dedicated to them; and while England was sunk in heathen darkness, the light of

the Celtic Church was burning brightly in the West. From that time down to the present day religious zeal has been the characteristic of the Welshman. "*Their Lord they shall praise.*"

The Norman Conquest, five centuries later, brought the Lowlands of Wales—the Borderland, or "Marches," as it was called—under the rule of Norman barons, but the wilder part of the country, though it condescended to borrow something of Norman civilization, remained independent. At the end of the reign of Henry III. Wales was a land of shepherd farmers, who knew well how to use the bow and the spear. They were divided into many tribes, but united by their religion and by their love of music, poetry, oratory, and all those arts which depend upon a vivid imagination for their growth. Even to this day the stories that they told are as fascinating to us as they were to the Welsh boys and girls who first heard them as they sat by the rude hearthstone, and heard the wind skirling down the mountain outside the heavily barred door.

Fortunately for this Celtic spirit of imagination that turns all it touches to gold, the next attempt at conquest shook rather than shattered the independence of Wild Wales. But we shall best understand and enjoy this part of the story of the land if we read it in connection with the particular places at which the more striking events occurred.

CHAPTER II

SNOWDONIA, THE FASTNESS OF LLEWELYN

The story of the great struggle of Wales for freedom under a Prince of her own is laid, fitly enough, amid the wild scenery that surrounds the highest point in Southern Britain. The whole district of Snowdon, with its grim moorlands and towering heights forming a bulwark to the western shore, breathes an air of freedom, and it was here that the last Llewelyn defied the might of the first English Edward.

Roused by the bitter lament of those who had fallen under the yoke of the Anglo-Norman barons, Llewelyn, Lord of Snowdon, threw off the pretence of alliance and friendship which Henry III. had thought well to keep up between them, and claimed to be ruler of all Wales, as his grandfather had done in the days of Henry II. During the long Barons' War in England the " Lord of Snowdon " found no difficulty in maintaining his right to be " Prince of Wales "; the real trouble only began when Edward I., on his accession, called upon the Prince to do homage as his vassal. For two years Llewelyn paid no heed, and when he heard that an English army was advancing upon him, went out boldly to meet it.

CONWAY CASTLE AND QUAY. *Page 11*

But the chieftains of Central and South Wales turned traitor, his own brother David deserted him, and the Prince, driven back to the inmost recesses of his mountain fastness, was forced to lay down his arms. Preferring to have him as friend rather than enemy, Edward behaved generously enough, merely seizing a large slice of his dominions, confining him to the Snowdon district, and providing that the title "Prince of Wales" should cease at his death.

Four years elapsed of outward peace and inward commotion. Then came a rumour of a strange event. Long years before, Merlin, a famous Welsh bard and prophet, had foretold that "when English money became round, a Prince of Wales should be crowned in London." In 1282 a new copper coinage had taken the place of the usual breaking of the silver penny into halves and quarters; and in that same year the traitor David, who had been rewarded with an English earldom, threw off his allegiance to Edward, and appeared with an army before his brother's dwelling-place. Gladly did Llewelyn once more raise the standard of revolt, and a desperate struggle for freedom began. The great army of the English King, encircling the Snowdon range, which was the headquarters of the Prince, drew in closer and closer; but meantime the English soldiers were suffering terribly in that hard

winter of 1282, which the hardy Welshmen, living in the snowbound caves of the mountain, seemed to pass through unheeding. As long as Llewelyn was there to inspire and cheer, pain and even death were to be welcomed; but almost by chance the men of Wales lost their leader in a quite unimportant skirmish. Llewelyn had emerged from his mountain lair, and, hoping to drive the English from the Brecknock district, had ridden forth to meet some allies. He was met by a party of English horsemen and cut down by an almost unknown knight. With Llewelyn, "our last ruler," as the Welsh still call him, the cause of Welsh independence was lost. At Rhuddlan, in Flintshire, you may still see a bit of the wall remaining where the Statute of Wales was passed by the Parliament held there in 1284; and in that Statute Edward showed the greatest wisdom; for, instead of forcing English laws and customs upon them, he allowed the Welsh to keep their own as far as possible, altering them only where it was clearly for their own advantage.

It was at Carnarvon Castle, which guards the entrance to "Snowdonia," that the little Prince was born who was presented by Edward I. to the Welsh chieftains upon a shield as a "Prince of Wales who could not speak a word of English." And nowadays Carnarvon is, perhaps, the best starting-point from

which to take a glimpse of this wild and mountainous district.

Behind us, as we look towards the mountains, lie the Menai Straits, spanned by the fine suspension bridge, so strong and yet so fairy-like with its arches of Anglesey marble, that it has been called a " poem in stone and iron." This bridge continues the Holyhead road to the island of Anglesey, the home of the Llewelyns, where the soil is so fertile that an old saying declares that it can provide corn enough for all the people in Wales ; and thence, across the island, we may reach Holyhead, the starting-point for the Irish mail-boats.

Travelling towards Snowdon by rail to Llanberis, the scenery changes rapidly from pretty woods and pastures to that of rugged heights, crags, and rock-bound lakes. The mountain valley in which the village lies is commanded by the very ancient Welsh castle of Dolbadarn, once the prison of Owen, the brother of the ill-fated Llewelyn, Lord of Snowdon. Below is the great lake, and beyond the wild Pass of Llanberis, bounded by a " tumultuous chaos of rock and crag, as if Titans in some burst of fury had been rending cliffs and flinging their fragments far and wide." If we are lazy, we may climb Snowdon by the little mountain train, but if not, we set off up the ascent till, just below the steepest part, we turn off a little from the path to look at the won-

derful hollow of Cwmglas, high up in the mountain-side, with its two tiny tarns, surrounded by " striated " or glacier-marked rocks.

A steep scramble brings us to the top of Snowdon, and if it is a clear day a glorious view rewards us. Beyond the line of sea is the blue range of the Wicklow Mountains in Ireland; below us, half hidden by the crags and shoulders of the huge mass, lie lakes and valleys, and the quiet lowlands stretching to the borders of the Atlantic.

Through one of the loveliest of these valleys we reach the mountain-girt village of Beddgelert. You all know the story of Llewelyn and his faithful dog, killed by his master because he thought he had eaten the child he had in reality saved from a wolf. Here you may see the stones which mark his tomb; but you will probably be told that the story is but a myth, and that the grave is really that of a Welsh chieftain named Gelert, and not of a dog at all. You may console yourselves with knowing that, whether this is true or not, the picturesque little village was a favourite hunting-spot for the Llewelyn whose story we know in history, and that the curious little church there is part of one of the oldest monasteries in Wales.

Another beautiful valley leads to the famous pass and bridge of Aberglaslyn. Here the huge cliffs on either hand approach so closely to one another

that there is barely room for road and river; and the wooded slopes, as they near the water, afford a strong contrast to the wild rocks above.

After this rugged splendour, the prettiness of the Fairy Glen at Bettws-y-Coed will seem tame enough. We will not linger there, but will finish our glimpse of this land of Llewelyn by a visit to Conway Castle, built by Edward I. in 1283, to safeguard this part of Wild Wales that he had so hardly won.

The town of Conway, "rugged without, beautiful within," is a fine example of the fortified walled towns of the Middle Ages. The walls are triangular, and are said to represent a Welsh harp, and are entered by crumbling stone gateways.

Above them towers the castle of Edward I., in which he was himself besieged on one occasion by the rebel Welsh, and was only saved by the arrival of his fleet.

The poet Gray makes this neighbourhood the scene of an event upon which the light of history throws grave doubt. The English King, believing that the conquest of Wales would never be completed while the bards remained to stir up the patriotic zeal of their fellow-countrymen, is said to have ordered a general massacre of them on the banks of the River Conway. It was the prophetic curse pronounced on the King by one of these bards, standing

" on a rock, whose haughty brow frowns o'er old Conway's foaming flood," which

> " Scattered wild dismay
> As down the steep of Snowdon's shaggy side
> He wound with toilsome march his long array."

In spite of " Cambria's curse and Cambria's tears," the English King must have felt fairly secure within the massive walls of the castle, whose banqueting-hall, now open to the sky, and ivy-grown, is of such noble length and breadth that it might well have contained a regiment of retainers. The passionate patriotism of Wales had little chance against the solid strength of English builders and English troops.

CHAPTER III

IN GLENDOWER LAND

As the name of Llewelyn is connected with the Snowdon district, so the name of another Welsh hero, Owen Glendower, lives still in that valley of the Dee that lies between Corwen and Llangollen.

The valley itself is one of the most interesting in Wales. Almost of a horseshoe shape, it is bounded by ranges of mountains, not very high, but beautiful

in shape and colour. On one side, a blaze of yellow gorse, Moel Gamelin rears his rounded head ; on the other the heather-clad heights of the Berwyns invite us to scramble up their slopes and to walk along the sky-line to the end of the vale. In the hollow lies the picturesque little market-town of Llangollen, and above it the steep cone-shaped hill is crowned by the ruined castle of Dinas Bran.

In the old days this castle must have been of great importance, for it guarded the entrance to the kingdom of Powys, the middle kingdom of Wales. It was the stronghold of Madoc, Lord of Powys, and of his son Griffith, who died in Llewelyn's last desperate struggle for freedom, both of whom were the ancestors of Owen Glendower himself.

Nowadays we shall find a relic of olden times in the harpist who sits upon the summit and plays Welsh airs, full of mournful sweetness, to those who visit the ruins. Below in the half-hidden Valle Crucis, lies one of the most famous of Welsh abbeys, which we are going to explore, in order to find the resting-place of these ancestors of Glendower.

In former days Valle Crucis Abbey, founded by the Lords of Dinas Bran, was noted for its hospitality—a virtue of which we are reminded by the ruins of a large hostel, or guest-house, and by the fish-ponds which still exist. Here are the

monks' dormitories ; and here, in the chapel, below the beautiful remains of the east window, lie the battered tombs of Madoc, the founder, and his son. Returning to Llangollen, and passing along the Holyhead road, we presently come to Glendyfrdwy, that " glen of the Dee " from which our hero Owen took his surname.

Like most young Welshmen of noble birth after the Conquest of Wales, Owen Glendower was brought up in England. Shakespeare makes him remind Hotspur that—

> " I can speak English, lord, as well as you,
> For I was trained up in the English Court,
> Where, being but young, I framed to the harp,
> Many an English ditty lovely well."

When Henry IV. became King, Owen appealed to him against Lord Grey of Ruthin, who had seized a piece of his moorland. The King favoured Lord Grey, and earned the lifelong hatred of his rival, who promptly recovered his land by force of arms. Grey of Ruthin took a mean revenge. When Henry summoned his Welsh barons, among others, to aid him in a war with Scotland, he suppressed the message that summoned Glendower, and then denounced him to the King as a traitor for not obeying his call. Glendower's house was immediately besieged, and he had only just time to escape to the woods. Now, Owen was no mean and unknown

DISTANT VIEW OF CARNARVON BAY.

Welsh knight. He was as learned in books as he was skilled in warfare, and his house at Sycherth, ten miles from his native valley, was famous for its hospitality. His wife and children were of noble breed; as a poet of the day sings: "His wife, the best of wives, beneficent mother of a beautiful nest of chieftains. Happy am I in her wine and metheglyn."

So, after a century of peace, when this descendant of the last Llewelyn raised the standard of revolt on the banks of the Dee, the Welshmen of the districts far and wide flocked to his aid, singing with the bard, Red Iolo:

> "Thy high renown shall never fail;
> Owen Glendower, the Great, the Good,
> Lord of Glyndyfrdwy's fertile vale,
> High born, princely Owen, hail!"

Ruthin, the stronghold of Lord Grey, now a quiet country-town, was first attacked and burnt to the ground. Before Henry's army, under the government of Harry Percy, or Hotspur, and the young Prince Henry, then a boy of fourteen, could act against them, the revolt had spread all over Wales, and had declared its aim to be independence of English rule. The success with which Glendower met soon earned for him the reputation of a wizard.

"I can call spirits from the vasty deep," Shake-

speare makes him boast to Hotspur; who rudely replies: "Ay, but will they answer?" But let the rough Northern Earl scoff as he might, Owen certainly met with almost uncanny success. The English troops, "bootless and weatherbeaten," were driven back across the borders again and again. Not only North Wales, but the South country also rose under him. Midway between the two stands "Pumlumon," better known as Plynlimmon, a five-pointed peak that rises, almost solitary, from the surrounding plain. Upon this top Glendower planted his standard, and from thence he managed to capture Mortimer, the powerful English Earl of royal blood, who became before long his son-in-law.

Owen was now openly acknowledged as Prince of Wales; castle after castle fell into his hands, and Parliaments were held by him at Dolgelly, under the shadow of Cader Idris, and elsewhere. But meantime Prince Henry, the future Henry V., was growing up and learning the art of war. It was he who, while Owen was busy in South Wales, came to his own valley of Glyndyfrdwy, and burnt his house down. For seven years the war went on, until the land was wellnigh ruined and the people weary of warfare. Pardons were freely offered and as freely accepted, until at last Owen Glendower found himself deserted. Still he would not give

in, and when Henry V., soon after he was made King, sent him an unasked for pardon by the hands of Glendower's own son, it came too late; the hero of Wales' last bid for independence was dead.

Nearly eighty years later Wales recovered her name for loyalty to an English Sovereign when a certain Henry Tudor, grandson of a Welsh country gentleman who had married a King's widow, landed at Milford Haven, and, with the aid of his fellow-countrymen, won the Battle of Bosworth, and was crowned King as Henry VII. And so, when Henry VIII., his son, wished to bring about the Union of England and Wales by Act of Parliament, no voice was lifted against it. But if Henry thought by this Act, and by forbidding all magistrates in Wales to use the Welsh language, he was going to make the country actually a part of England, he was greatly mistaken. The upper classes might flock to the English Court and forget their Welsh homes, but the greater part of the people—the workers of the nation—kept their own speech, their own customs, their own traditions. The days of warfare were over; but still you can tell a Welshman from an Englishman wherever he is found. He may talk the purest English, but the fall and rise of his voice as he talks differs from the more monotonous tones of his Anglo-Saxon companion. He

is more excitable, more easily moved to wrath, or tears, or laughter, and he possesses, as a rule, a far more vivid imagination than is found anywhere outside the Celtic race of which he forms a part.

CHAPTER IV

A WELSH MARKET-TOWN

We have come to the end of Glendower's story, but before we leave his part of the country altogether let us pay a visit to Corwen, the old market-town that lies so near his own valley.

Someone has said that Corwen is "relentlessly tucked away under the dark shoulder" of the heather-clad Berwyns, for above it lies the height of Pen-y-Pigyn, which certainly keeps the sun off very effectually. In the porch of the old church, indeed, we shall find a great stone, called by a Welsh name that means "the pointed stone in the icy nook." A legend, found in many other parts of Wales, says that the builders vainly tried to erect the church, which was built before the town, on a sunnier position farther down the valley, but every night the walls were destroyed and the materials

carried down to the sunless spot under the hill. Just above the vestry door of that same church is a curious mark, said to have been made by the dagger of Glendower, flung by him in a fit of rage one day from the top of Pen-y-Pigyn.

So far away is Corwen from mines or flannel mills or tourist centres, that it forms in many ways a good example of a Welsh country-town, as it might have existed not long after the days of Glendower himself.

The great interest lies in the monthly fair-day, when the streets and market-place are full of shaggy Welsh ponies, black-faced mountain-sheep, and cattle with immense horns. At every corner stand groups of farmers, talking eagerly with hands and shoulders as much as with lips, and with that curious rise and fall of the voice which, they tell us, is the secret of Welsh oratory. Of that conversation the Saxon from over the border understands not a word; but no sooner does he make a remark than with the utmost ease the Welshmen respond in excellent English. The power of expressing themselves equally well in both languages is a striking feature of even the most uneducated classes in Wales. Only here and there in some farm hidden far away among the hills could one meet with the experience of one who, weary and thirsty after a long tramp over the high moors, approached a

tiny farm-house and asked the old woman who opened the door for a cup of milk. A shake of the head was the only reply. "But you must have milk or water in the house!" persisted the visitor. Another shake and a stream of words in an unknown tongue followed. Not to be baffled, the Saxon raised his hand to his mouth and made as if to drink.

With a cry of delight the old dame rushed away, and returned with a large bowlful of liquid, of which the traveller eagerly partook. It was fine thick butter-milk, but, alas! it was quite sour!

Perhaps, however, the chief regret in the visitor's mind was the impossibility of explaining why the bowl was returned full to the brim, for the old dame's puzzled look said plainly enough: "What more *could* the stranger want than good Welsh butter-milk?"

Meantime the market-women have spread out their goods—poultry, butter, eggs, and flowers—on the market-stalls in a picturesque fashion enough. Many of the women themselves are worth the attention of an artist, with their strong brown faces, black crisp hair, and very dark blue eyes, "put in with a smutty finger," as someone has well described them.

Fifty years ago you would have seen them dressed in short red skirts, buckled shoes, crossed bodices,

and tall steeple-crowned hats worn over caps ; but these, unfortunately, have vanished.

The men—farmers or cattle-drovers for the most part—differ in face more than they do in name. To English ears everyone seems to be called either David Mor-r-gan (with a beautiful roll to the " r ") or Owen Jones. But to the careful eye the difference between the two original races is clear. The one is still short, smaller in build, and very dark-haired ; the other is tall, ruddy, with long loose limbs and fiery red hair.

Borrow, whose amusing description of his walks in " Wild Wales " you will like some day to read, thus describes a fair at Llangollen some fifty years ago, and from what one knows of these country-towns, one would not expect to find things very different to-day.

" The fair," he says, " was held in and near a little square in the south-east quarter of the town. It was a little bustling fair, attended by plenty of people from the country. A dense row of carts extended from the police-station half across the space. These carts were filled with pigs, and had stout cord nettings drawn over them, to prevent the animals escaping.

" By the sides of these carts the principal business of the fair appeared to be going on—there stood the owners, male and female, higgling with Llangollen

men and women who came to buy. The pigs were all small, and the price given seemed to vary from eighteen to twenty-five shillings. Those who bought pigs generally carried them away in their arms, and then there was no little diversion. Dire was the screaming of the porkers, yet the purchaser always knew how to manage his bargain, keeping the left arm round the body of the swine, and with the right hand fast gripping the ear. Some few were led away by strings.

" There were some Welsh cattle, small, of course, and the purchasers of these seemed to be Englishmen—tall, burly fellows in general, far exceeding the Welsh in height and size. . . .

" Now and then a big fellow made an offer, and held out his hand for a little Celtic grazier to give it a slap—a cattle bargain being concluded by a slap of the hand—but the Welshman generally turned away with a half-resentful exclamation.

" There were a few horses and ponies in a street leading into the fair — I saw none sold, however. . . .

" Now, if I add there was much gabbling of Welsh round about, and here and there some slight sawing of English—that in the street leading from the north there were some stalls of gingerbread, and a table at which a queer-looking being, with a red Greek cap on his head, sold rhubarb, herbs, and

VALLE CRUCIS [illegible] Page [illegible]

phials containing I know not what—I think I have said all that is necessary about Llangollen Fair."

Perhaps, however, we should visit Corwen or any other Welsh market-town on a Sunday to see the most striking characteristics of the people.

The streets are nearly deserted, and a strange stillness broods over the place. At the open door of some of the cottages an aged woman sits with a Welsh Bible on her knees, and keeps an eye upon the toddling baby at her feet. Everyone else has vanished, and not until a burst of melody sounds from the plainly-built chapels which occur so frequently on the highways and within the township, is their whereabouts revealed. Such singing it is, too! It has been said that the Welsh people sing naturally in parts, and certainly it seems as though nothing but years of training would produce such a result with English choirs, not to speak of a whole congregation, as is the case in Wales. In perfect time and tune the beautiful old Welsh melodies ring forth, and we begin to realize what a large part this hymn-singing and fiery enthusiastic preaching plays in the daily life of this emotional and deeply religious people.

CHAPTER V

A VISIT TO ANGLESEY AND HOLYHEAD

We took such a brief backward glimpse at Anglesey and Holy Island when we were visiting Llewelyn's country that we may as well now make a longer visit.

Crossing the Menai Straits by the suspension bridge, we pass through a treeless moorland and over a causeway into Holy Island, from whence rises up the great headland known as Holyhead.

"A divine promontory," Ruskin calls it, "looking westward—the Holy Headland—still not without awe when its red light glares first through the gloom."

The first thing we shall want to visit here is South Stack, a precipitous mass of cliff climbed by three hundred and eighty steps. From thence we look down on the lighthouse, which, though one hundred and fifty feet high, looks from this point like a child's toy. The cliff scenery is magnificent here, and a grand sea rolls in to the foot of the rocks.

On our way back we must go to see some most interesting relics of old days. They are known as the Irishmen's Huts, and were first built in those ancient times when tribes of Irish Celts crossed over to the island, and thence to the mainland,

threatening, indeed, to displace altogether the original people of the land, and themselves driven out in later days by another race. These huts are grouped together so as to form tiny villages, in spots where they are guarded either by steep rocks or by roughly-constructed walls. They are round in shape, and built of stone, though the remains of the walls are now not more than two feet high. All the entrances look towards the south, as though the inhabitants knew the value of sunshine ; and the doorways are formed of two upright stones, with another placed across the top. The roofs were probably thatched or turfed over poles, which stretched from one wall to the other.

From what was found under the ground on which they stand when it was examined some years ago, it seems as though some of these huts were used for living in, some for bathing, some for working metal, some for kitchens. Necklaces of jet, stone lamps, weapons of bronze, and moulds for making bronze buttons were found in some. In others there are the remains of an apparatus for working metal ; in others there are tanks, in which water was boiled by throwing hot stones into the water they contained.

Retracing our way by rail, we pass the village of Llangadwaladr, the home of the last British Prince to hold the title of King of All Britain. The son of this Prince, Cadwaladr, who lived and died in

the seventh century, is buried in the church of the place that bears his name, the "enclosure, or church, of Cadwaladr." But the chief interest lies in his father, Cadwallon, and his cousin, Brian, who together won one of the last great battles in the cause of British freedom against the English conquerors.

Cadwallon, son of King Cadfan, and Edwin, son of King Ethelfrid of Northumbria, were both born about the same year in the island of Anglesey, or Mona, as the Celts call it ; for the Celtic mother of Edwin had been driven out of the royal palace, and had returned to her former home. The boys were brought up together in Brittany, another Celtic kingdom, and returned together to Anglesey, where they lived until, on the death of his father, Cadwallon was chosen King of All Britain. This was, however, but an empty title, for almost at that very time Edwin left the island and made his way to Northumbria, where he seized the kingdom and with it much of the land of the Britons which lay upon its borders. But Cadwallon cared not, because he had been his friend.

Now the heart of Brian, the nephew of the British King, was very sore because of the sufferings of his fellow-countrymen at the hands of the English conquerors. One day, as he hunted the otter with his uncle on the banks of a river, the King was

overcome with heat and lay down to sleep, putting his head on the lap of the lad.

But Brian's heart was so heavy that his tears ran down upon the face of Cadwallon, who muttered uneasily : " It rains, it rains !"

Then, opening his eyes, he saw the blue sky above him, and said to his nephew : " Surely there has been a shower, and now the sun is shining. But where is the rainbow ?"

And Brian said : " My lord, it shines upon the head of Edwin !"

Then Cadwallon saw his tearful face, and asked him what he meant ; and Brian told him all his woe. Whereupon Cadwallon swore to devote the rest of his life to winning back the land of Britain for her own people.

But the strong King of Northumbria drove him back from his borders again and again, and almost in despair he set sail with Brian to seek help from Brittany. A great storm arose, however, drove the ship upon the rocks, and everyone was drowned save Cadwallon and his nephew, who were cast upon a desert island.

There, says the tale, King Cadwallon would have died of hunger and heart-break had not the devoted Brian secretly cut off a slice of his own flesh, which he roasted and gave to his uncle, saying it was venison. The King ate and took courage, and

after a time they were able to pass over the stormy sea in the wrecked boat to Brittany.

The King of that land promised help, but meantime Brian heard that his sister had been taken a captive to Edwin's Court, and that Edwin himself was much under the influence of a certain clever counsellor, who was especially hostile to the Britons.

So Brian, dressed in beggar's rags, but carrying a spiked staff, crossed to Wessex, and made the long journey on foot to York to the palace of Edwin. Standing outside, among a crowd of outcasts, he presently saw his sister come forth from the Queen's household with a pitcher on her head to draw water from the well. At once he pretended to ask alms of her, and meantime told her who he was, and bade her point out to him the wily counsellor among Edwin's followers. At that moment the latter came out with a bag of money for the beggars, and Brian, rushing forward, pierced him to the heart with his pointed staff, and then vanished among the crowd.

Fleeing from thence to Penda, the strong King of the Mercians, Brian won him over to his uncle's side, and forthwith Cadwallon, Brian, and Penda marched against Edwin in a great battle, in which the King of Northumbria, Cadwallon's foster-father, was defeated and slain.

Penda took care to secure the northern kingdom

for himself, but until his death Cadwallon earned his title to some extent by becoming undisputed ruler over Wales, Devon, Cornwall, and the land now known as Westmorland and Cumberland.

He married a sister of grim King Penda, and their son was the peaceful Cadwaladr, in whose reign much of the land of the Britons was again lost to them. Never again did Welsh Prince claim to be King of All Britain, even in name.

CHAPTER VI

AN EISTEDDFOD

No one who knows and loves Wales will have failed to be present at some time or another at that most interesting and curious ceremony known as an Eisteddfod.

The name simply means a "sitting," and probably refers, not to the spectators, but to the "chairing" of the bard, which forms a chief part in the proceedings.

These gatherings, for the purpose of preserving the poetry and music of the country, are held all over the land; but each year a great national Eisteddfod is held at some convenient centre; and

of this notice is published a year and a day beforehand.

At the appointed time, before crowds of spectators, the trumpets are sounded, and the candidates are presented for the " degree " of bard. For this they have to pass tests of various kinds, poetical and literary, which are judged then and there. Then the " bards " present their addresses to the audience—a poem, a prose composition, a song, as the case may be. Musical competitions form a very marked feature of the contest. From far and near the country choirs flock in, and rival each other in choral and solo singing, until one is adjudged the prize.

Other competitors play the harp or violin, and when the contest is decided, the great ceremony of " chairing the bard " begins. A " chair subject " having been previously set for competition, the winner is solemnly conducted to a chair of carved oak, a naked sword is held over his head, and he is greeted with the blare of trumpets as the bard. A concert, given by well-known singers, closes the proceedings, which have often lasted for two or three days.

This ceremony dates from very far-off times. It may, indeed, be found in some form in the time of that wonderful King Arthur of whom you have all heard.

CARNARVON CASTLE. *Page 10.*

He, as you know, was King of Britain in the "days before history," and at his Court it was the custom to set tests of valour to his knights. Once he set seven of them to find fair Olwen, daughter of Thornogre Thistlehair, chief of the Giants, and they were given a year and a day for their quest. Of the many wonderful adventures that befell them you may read in a delightful collection of Welsh stories called the "Mabinogion," or "Book for Girls and Boys."

At another Yule-tide his nephew, Sir Gawayne, was put to a more severe test. A Green Knight of immense stature rode into the dining-hall of the King, and dared any knight present to give him, who was armed only with a holly-stick, a blow with an axe, on the condition that he should receive a blow in return a year and a day after the event.

Sir Gawayne proved himself the only one who was not too dismayed at such a condition, and with one good blow cut off the Green Knight's head. The latter, however, merely picked it up, and held it aloft, upon which the head, opening its eyes and addressing Sir Gawayne, said :

"Look you, be ready as you have promised, and seek me till you find me. Get you to Green Chapel a year and a day from now, there to receive a blow on New Year's Eve."

The adventures of Sir Gawayne must be read

elsewhere. They form the subject of a fine English poem of the fourteenth century, and were certainly of the nature of a test of courage and endurance.

By the sixth century the Eisteddfod seems to have become more of a test of poetical and musical talent than of knightly skill and prowess. Those who proved themselves worthy at the yearly gathering were classed as bards, and were given the right of entry into the castles of all Welsh barons and Princes. At one of the earliest of these meetings Gwynedd, Prince of North Wales, in order to show how superior vocal music was to that performed on instruments, offered a prize to the bards who should swim over the Conway.

Eagerly the test was accepted, but when they reached the farther bank the unfortunate harpists found their strings were ruined by the water, while the singers were merely braced up to even more successful efforts than before.

In the twelfth century we hear of a very notable Eisteddfod held at Caerwys, now a little country-town, hidden away on a high tableland among the hills, but notable in former days as the favourite residence of the last Llewelyn. It was his ancestor, Griffith, who held there a gathering, "to which there repaired all the men of Wales and also some from England and Scotland," says the proud historian of the event. And another is described as

taking place at Cardigan Castle, where assembled many bards, harpers, and minstrels, "the best to be found in all Wales."

In the last century this interesting old custom, which had become much neglected, was revived, and now almost every Welsh town can boast of its own little Eisteddfod, in which the various choirs of church and chapel, the plough-boy poet and the clever school-child, all play their part in keeping alive that spirit of poetry and music which is characteristic of the national character of Wild Wales.

CHAPTER VII

"MEN OF HARLECH"

When Edward I. had completed his so-called conquest of Wales, he safeguarded the land he had won by building seven strong castles in seven danger-spots. Those at Carnarvon and Conway we have already visited, but most interesting of all is Harlech Castle, linked as it is with the story of the far-off past as well as with the more modern history of Wales.

Built on a crag of rock that juts from a terrace two hundred feet above the plain, stand the great

stone towers, looking towards the majestic range of Snowdon to the north, and guarding the wide stretch of country below; while to the west they gaze over the Irish Sea. Legend tells us that the castle stands upon the site of a far more ancient building, Branwen's Tower, which stood there a thousand years before English Edward was heard of.

Bran the Blessed was King of Britain in those days, and with him in his fortress at Harlech lived his sister, Branwen, the fairest maiden in all the land.

Now, one day, says the legend, Bran was at Harlech with his brothers and his followers, and sat with them upon the great rock overlooking the sea. And as they sat they saw thirteen ships coming from Ireland and making straight towards them. Then Bran the Blessed raised himself and said: "I see swift ships coming to this land. See that my officers equip themselves right well and go to find out their errand."

So the officers did so, and when the ships drew near the shore, behold, they saw that they were very richly furnished, with ropes of silk and flags of satin. And in the foremost stood one who lifted a shield high above the bulwarks, and the point of the shield was held upward in token of peace.

Then the strangers landed, and when they had saluted the King, Bran from his rock said unto

them : " Heaven prosper you, my friends. To whom do these ships belong, and who amongst you is your chief ?"

And they said : " Behold, the King of Ireland, Matholwch, is here as suitor unto thee, and he will not land unless thou grant him his desire."

" And what is his desire ?" asked the King.

And they said : " He would make alliance with thee, lord, by taking in marriage Branwen, thy fair sister ; that, if it seem good to thee, the Island of the Mighty might be joined to the Island of the Blessed, and so both become more powerful."

" Let him land," said King Bran, " and we will take counsel together upon this matter."

So the two Kings met in friendly wise, and it was arranged that Matholwch should marry Branwen, the fairest damsel in the land, and that the wedding should take place at Aberffraw, in Anglesey.

There a great feast was held, all in tents, " for no house could contain Bran the Blessed." But when the banquet was at its height, came in the bride's half-brother, Evnyssian, and, out of spite, because he had not been consulted in the matter, he went to the stables where the horses of the Irish King had been housed, and " cut off their lips to the teeth and their ears close to their heads, and their tails close to their backs, and their eyelids to the bone."

In his wrath, when he discovered this, the Irish King would have broken off the alliance and declared war there and then, but Bran managed to appease his anger by giving him " a silver rod as tall as himself and a plate of gold as wide as his face ;" and so he sailed away to the Isle of Saints with his fair bride.

But he never forgot the insult that had been offered him, for his people, jealous of the strange Queen, were constantly reminding him of it ; and after her little son, Gwern, was born, the King deposed her from her place at his side, and ordered her to be cook in his palace.

Sad indeed was Branwen, for she was lonely in the land ; but she reared a starling in the cover of her kneading-trough, and when she had written down the story of her wrongs, she tied the letter under the bird's wing, and set it free. The bird, it is said, flew straight to Carnarvon, the abode at that time of King Bran, perched upon his shoulder, and flapped his wings till the letter was seen and taken from him.

Full of anger at the treatment his sister had received, King Bran called together his fighting-men and embarked for Ireland. But Matholwch had no will for warfare, and, having held converse with him, offered to make up for the wrongs offered to his wife by giving up his crown at once to his young

son Gwern. To this Bran agreed, and forthwith the Irish King ordered a great banquet to be prepared, that the contract might be sealed.

Now, the boy Gwern was present at this banquet, and showed himself so lovable and so fair that all admired him. But his wicked uncle, Evnyssian, who had already wrought so much evil, waited till he came near, and then of a sudden seized him by neck and ankles, and threw him into the great fire that blazed upon the hearth. In vain did Branwen try to fling herself into the flames that she might save her son. The deed was done before she could grasp him, and his fair body had become a heap of ashes.

Because of this foul deed did bitter warfare break out between the two countries, and so hard went the fighting against the British that at length only seven knights were left alive on the side of Bran, and he himself was sorely wounded in the head, so that he was about to die. Then Bran the Blessed commanded this poor remnant of his followers to strike off his head and bear it to his native land, and he bade them keep it at Harlech for seven years, and then to set it upon the White Mount in the city of Lud; which place is now called Tower Hill in London town.

So the seven knights returned to Harlech with the head of their King, and with them they brought

his sister, the unhappy Branwen. And on their way they rested in Anglesey, where Branwen, looking first towards Ireland and then towards Britain, cried with tears : " Woe is me that I was ever born, for two islands have been destroyed because of me !"

Then died poor Branwen of a broken heart, and they buried her in Anglesey, at a spot known henceforth as Ynys Branwen, " where a square grave was made for her on the banks of the Alaw, and there was she laid."*

Early in the last century a four-sided hole was discovered by a farmer in this place, covered over with coarse flagstones. Within was an urn, placed with its mouth downwards, and full of ashes and fragments of bone. The urn was certainly one of that period known as the Bronze Age, and belonged to the " days before history," so we may not unsafely conclude that the ashes it contained were really those of the unhappy Branwen, sister of Bran the Blessed.

And so we come back to Harlech Castle, still with its Branwen Tower, built by Edward I. as a bulwark against the " rebel Welsh."

In later days Owen Glendower besieged and obtained possession of the castle, and was in his

* From the "Mabinogion," according to the version in Rev. S. Baring-Gould's " Book of North Wales."

BRAN THE BLESSED AT HARLECH CASTLE WATCHING MATHOLWCH'S FLEET ARRIVE FROM IRELAND. *Page 56.*

turn besieged there by Prince Henry. There it was that his son-in-law, Mortimer, died, and there the wife and children of the latter took, for the last time, refuge when the place was once again captured by the English.

The Wars of the Roses caused stirring times at Harlech. The castle was held against Edward IV. by David ap Sinion, who had offered to receive there under his protection Margaret, the unfortunate widow of Henry VI., and her son, young Edward, after she had lost the Battle of Northampton.

Against this "rebel" marched Lord Herbert, who called upon David to surrender. But David had done good work for the Lancastrian cause abroad, and he now replied that "he had held a castle so long in France that all the old women in Wales had talked about it; and now he was going to hold Harlech so long that he would set the tongues of all the old women in France wagging."

Great was the slaughter in that siege, during which, it is said, the "March of the Men of Harlech" was written to stir the neighbouring vassal chieftains to revolt against the usurping Edward.

"Fierce the beacon light is flaming,
With its tongues of fire proclaiming
'Chieftains, sundered to your shaming,
Strongly now unite!'

At the cry all Arfon rallies,
War-cries rend her hills and valleys,
Troop on troop, with headlong sallies,
Hurtle to the fight.

" Chiefs lie dead and wounded,
Yet where first 'twas grounded,
Freedom's flag still holds the crag,
Her trumpet still is sounded;
O, there we'll keep her banner flying
While the pale lips of the dying
Echo to our shout defying,
' Harlech for the right !' "

Even in the English words the chant is inspiring in the extreme; the Welsh words, joined to the warlike tune, would stir the veriest coward to play his part like a hero.

Sad to say, the brave David was forced at length to surrender, on condition that his life was granted.

To the honour of Lord Herbert be it told that when Edward wished to put David to death he sought him out, and demanded of him one of two things: either he must send David back to his castle and despatch another officer to besiege it, or he must take the life of Herbert himself in place of that of the prisoner. Finally, the King forgave David, and Harlech, the last to hold out for the Lancastrian cause, submitted.

CHAPTER VIII

A BURIED VILLAGE

To-day we are going to take a glimpse at two Welsh lakes, to one of which a most romantic story is attached.

We start from Lake Bala, or Llyn Tegid, as it was called in the days of Taliesin. Borrow, that whimsical traveller, who walked throughout Wales, and knew the country as few Welshmen do themselves, thus describes it :

"I wandered to the northern shore of Llyn Tegid . . . the wind was blowing from the south, and tiny waves were beating against the shore, which consisted of small brown pebbles. The lake has not its name, which signifies Lake of Beauty, for nothing. It is a beautiful sheet of water, and beautifully situated. It is oblong, and about six miles in length. On all sides except to the north it is bounded by hills. Those at the southern end are very lofty, the tallest of which is Aran, which lifts its head to the clouds like a huge loaf." Then he recalls how a hut by the edge of this lake was in former days the refuge of Llewarch the Aged, who lived to the age of 140, and had twenty-four

sons, all of whom were slain by the Saxon invader in the grim days of old.

In more recent times the town of Bala was noted for the knitting industry; and a hundred years ago one might have seen the Tomen of Bala, a great mound overlooking the valley, covered with a crowd of knitters—men, women, and children—all plying their needles with busy fingers.

And now we turn our backs on the old lake and its prosperous little market-town, and set off to find a new lake, which only came into existence in the year 1881, which yet, in many ways, has a stranger and more romantic story than any that Llyn Tegid can boast.

Up and up climbs the steep, rough road to the top of the wild pass on the ridge of the Berwyns; or, if we want a yet wilder walk, we may strike off it to the left across the moorlands, steering our way through pathless bogs and treacherous swamps, till we reach a steep precipice guarding a valley through which rushes a torrent of waterfalls. Along the side of this sheer rock runs a narrow sheep-path—so narrow that we creep along on hands and feet across chasms, where it disappears altogether, and finally drop down a headlong descent into the valley of Lake Vyrnwy.

Five miles of peaceful grey water lie below us,

fed by mountain torrents such as that we have skirted in our perilous descent.

Scarcely a house is to be seen, for the new hotel and its surroundings lie hidden by the bend of the shore; it seems a valley of the dead. Yet before the year 1880, in the Valley of Llanwddyn, as it was called, a village of 500 inhabitants existed; and a church and chapels, inn, and village street, farms and cornfields flourished where now stands that great expanse of water.

A quiet, secluded folk they were, knowing little English and even less of the ambitions and needs of the great industrial cities with one of which they were to be brought into such close touch. Quietly they lived and quietly they went to rest under the shadow of their grey church tower among the hills.

But meantime that great busy monster, the city of Liverpool, was crying out for more water. A huge reservoir must be secured, and since no other was available, some mountain valley, shut in on all sides, must be turned into a lake for the purpose. The news fell like a thunderbolt on the peaceful valley-dwellers. In vain they were told of compensation, of new and more comfortable houses to be built for them on the wooded ridge above the lake. To the old people the whole thing came upon them as nothing less than a devastation like

that which overtook Pompeii of old. One old dame, indeed, is said to have chosen death by drowning rather than leave the roof of her ancestors, and a scene of actual violence occurred before she could be removed.

They tell us that a sailor, a native of Llanwddyn, returned after a lengthy absence to visit his home. You can imagine his feelings when, as he climbed the pass and began the steep descent, he saw his native valley transformed into an immense lake. We, too, as we pass along its shores and gaze into the watery depths, may see, with fancy's eye, the smiling cottage, the cheerful little farm, the sunny gardens, lying buried amid the slimy waterweeds. There stood the old church, founded in the sixth century, and rebuilt by the famous Knights of Jerusalem in the twelfth, whose bell "jangled for loyalty with such strange noise and good affection," when Beaufort made his progress through Wales in the days of James II. Now that little belfry lies silent far below the surface.

These are thoughts that tend to sadness, however, and we may cheer ourselves with a funny tale told of the workmen who were building the huge dam by which the water is pent in. Mr. Baring-Gould tells it as follows :

"Now, it fell out that when the dam was in

course of construction, there was a stone in the river called Carreg yr Ysbryd, or the Ghost Rock, and it had to be removed. This was supposed to cover an evil spirit that had been laid and banned beneath it. The Welsh labourers engaged on the work would have nothing to do with shifting the block, but the English navvies had no scruples, and they blasted the rock, and with crowbars heaved out of place the fragments that remained.

"Then was revealed a cavity with water in it, and lo! the surface was agitated, and something rose out of it. The Taffies took to their heels. Then an old toad emerged, hopped on to a stone, yawned, and passed its paws over its eyes, as though rousing itself after a long sleep.

"'It's nobbut a frog,' said the Yorkshire navvies.

"'It's Cynon himself,' retorted the Welshmen. (Cynon was a wizard of the ancient days.) 'Look how he gapes and rubs his face. You may see by that he has been in prison.'

"After that, whenever a Taffy was observed to yawn, 'Ah ha!' said his mates; 'clearly you have but recently come out of prison.'"

CHAPTER IX

THE SACRED RIVER

In our peeps at North Wales we have more than once had a glimpse of the River Dee. To-day we will pretend we have taken a "coracle," one of the curious oval boats which were used in the very earliest days, and which you may sometimes see a man carrying on his shoulders from one bend of the river to another. "Carry thou me, and I will carry thee," an old Welsh proverb makes the coracle say to the fisherman; and it shall now carry us down the course of the river as far as it lies within the land of Wales. The River Dee, one of the most lovely in Wales, has always been connected with the mysterious religion of the Druids. Its very name in old days, *Deva*, meant the goddess, or the "divine one"; and its modern Welsh form, *Dwy*, means the same thing. A legend of Druid times says that the Dee springs from two fountains high up in the mountains above Bala, called Dwy Fawr and Dwy Fach, or the Great and Little Dee, whose waters pass through those of the Lake of Bala without mingling with them, and come out at its northern extremity. These fountains had their names from two individuals, Dwy Fawr and Dwy Fach, who

A DRUID PRIEST. *Page 4.*

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escaped from the Deluge when all the rest of the human race were drowned, and the passing of the waters of the two fountains through the lake without mingling with its flood is an emblem of the salvation of the two individuals from the Deluge, of which the lake is a type.

Probably the river was worshipped as a goddess in those days, and when Wales learnt the Christian faith, it would be but fitting that her bank should be crowded with those who sought baptism in her waters. Nowadays, too, it is no uncommon sight to see a little group of people by the waterside presiding over the baptism of one or more of their companions.

Soon after leaving the lake the Dee passes through a district that is closely connected with the youth of that great Celtic hero, King Arthur. There are few parts of Wales which—by their names, at least—allow us to forget that Arthur and his Court played a famous part in Britain in the days before history. And here we have Caer Gai, the ancient stronghold of Sir Kay, the foster-brother of Arthur, who could make himself as tall as the tallest tree in the forest, or lie hidden in lake or river for nine days and nights, if needs be. Such fire was in his nature that when they needed warmth his companions had but to kindle the piled wood at his finger ; he could walk through torrents of rain as dry as on a summer's

day ; he could go for nine days and nights without sleep ; and no doctor could heal the wounds made by his sword.

It was in this district of Penllyn, opposite to the hill of Yr Aran, which he calls "Rauran," that Spenser in his great poem makes King Arthur describe the way his boyhood was passed in the "stronghold of Kay," or Caer Gai :

> "Whose dwelling is low in a valley green
> Under the fort of Rauran, mossy hoar,
> From whence the River Dee, as silver clean,
> His tumbling billows rolls with gentle roar ;
> There all my days he trained me up in virtuous lore."

But, apart from legend, Caer Gai touches history itself. From its well-preserved ramparts and "fosse," or moat, enclosing what is now a farmhouse, we see that it must have once been a Roman fortress. Roman urns have been dug up here, and not very many years ago a ploughman turned up a stone with an inscription that showed it must have been placed there by Roman soldiers about A.D. 105.

Leaving Llyn Tegid, or Bala Lake, behind us, we set off down our river to Corwen and Llangollen. These places we have already visited, so we will only stay to notice the lovely scenery of this part of the Dee, so dear to fishers. Not far from where the river bends north-east to Chester and the sea,

stands Chirk Castle, and near by, in order to reach it from Llangollen, we shall pass the line of Offa's Dyke, a bank with a moat below it that ran from the mouth of the Dee to the mouth of the Wye, which was erected by a King of Mercia in the eighth century as a barrier beyond which no Welshman might pass.

For the rest of its course, therefore, the Dee really forms part of the boundary-line between England and Wales, and though we shall be sorely tempted to linger when we come to the beautiful old city of Chester, gazing down from its ancient walls upon the broad river below, we must remind ourselves that this is English soil, and leave the sacred waters of the Dee to empty themselves by a very long estuary into the sea some miles below Flint Castle, the last refuge of the unhappy Richard II. before he gave himself into the hands of Bolingbroke.

CHAPTER X

A PEEP AT PEMBROKE

To-day we will leave North Wales and travel south to take a glimpse at Pembrokeshire, in some ways one of the most interesting counties in Wales.

Between the northern and southern parts of the

country runs a stream, flowing into St. Bride's Bay, which divides the Welsh Pembroke from a district known as " Little England beyond Wales."

Here, in this latter region, one hears nothing but English spoken. The towns, the people, are typically English, or, at least, very far from being typically Welsh. This is how a seventeenth-century writer accounts for the fact :

" This same division was in ancient time inhabited wholly by Welshmen, but a great part thereof was won from them by the Englishmen under the conduct of Earl Strongbow, and divers others, and the same planted with Englishmen whose posterity enjoys it to this day, and keep their language among themselves without receiving the Welsh speech or learning any part thereof, and hold themselves so close to the same as to this day they wonder at a Welshman coming among them, the one neighbour saying to the other : ' Look ! there goeth a Welshman !' "

The interesting thing about this is that these people of South Pembroke were probably not English at all in origin, but Flemings, who came over from Flanders many centuries ago, and settled there with their woollen manufactures — a trade which perhaps accounts for the superiority of " Welsh flannel " to-day.

These were, like their Welsh neighbours, a very

religious and emotional people, and more ready, perhaps, than the former to leave the land of their adoption for the perils of the Holy War. For a writer of the time of the early Crusades tells the story of a certain Archbishop's journey through Wales to rouse volunteers for the war in far-off Palestine ; and to him " it appears wonderful and miraculous that, although he addressed the Pembroke people both in the Latin and French tongues, these persons, who understood neither of these languages, were much affected, and flocked in great numbers to the cross. . . . They are," he goes on to say, " a brave and robust people, ever most hostile to the Welsh—a people well versed in commerce and woollen manufactures, anxious to seek gain by sea or land, in defiance of fatigue and danger, a hardy race, equally fitted for the plough or the sword."

Suppose we take a steamer from the charming little seaport town of Tenby, and follow the coastline of Pembroke up to Milford Haven. Romantic cliffs guard the land, and limestone caverns hint at smuggling expeditions in the good old days. Here is Caldy Island, where stood one of the oldest of Benedictine priories ; and here, at St. Gowan's Head, the cliff, rising to a great height above the sea, is split up into a narrow cleft by the force of the waves.

Across this chasm is built a little cell, known as St. Gowan's Chapel, from which a doorway leads to a cave in the cliff, shaped exactly like a human figure. The legend says that St. Gowan, a holy man of God, was praying in his cell when his heathen foes came battering at the door. He called upon the rock to be his shelter, and immediately it opened to admit him. When his enemies had gone away baffled, and the saint had emerged, the impression of his form was found in the cliff ; and nowadays they say that if you stand in the cavity and wish, and then turn round without changing your mind, the wish is sure to come true.

Now we are entering Milford Haven, " the finest harbour in the United Kingdom," stretching ten miles inland, with its many bays, creeks, and roadsteads. Sailing up the right-hand shore, we presently reach Pembroke Dock, two miles from the town of Pembroke, where stand the ruins of one of the earliest built and strongest of the many castles of Wales.

From its huge towers and turrets Strongbow started on that adventurous journey of his with the aim of conquering Ireland. For many years after the conquest of Wales its grim keep, with its conical roof capped by an enormous millstone, menaced the rebel Welsh. There, in 1456, was born Henry Tudor, one day to be Henry VII. of

England, and there he spent the first ten years of his boyhood. There also was his landing-place when he came to drive the usurping Richard from the throne.

Its story during the Civil War is strange enough. Pembroke Castle, under Poyer, the Mayor of Pembroke, was the only place in Wales that declared for the Parliament. But it looked as though this was only done for love of opposition to the majority, for when the war was over and troops were being sent back home, Poyer refused to give up his post as Governor of the Castle, and roused up the whole of South Wales for the Royalist cause, then practically dead. Great must have been the surprise of the Puritans, but before long Cromwell himself was putting the rebels to flight and battering at the walls of Pembroke Castle, where so many had taken refuge.

"A very desperate enemy, very many of them gentlemen of quality, and thoroughly resolved," so Oliver described them. But the well of drinking-water had been captured by him, and hunger and thirst compelled them to surrender. Poyer and two other leaders were sent to the Tower and condemned to death, but pardon being granted to two of the three, lots were then drawn. "Life given by God" was written on two slips; the third was a blank. Poyer drew the last, and, facing death

with the utmost courage, was shot at Covent Garden.

It is tempting to take a glimpse at the stately ruins of Carew Castle, another great stronghold of old times ; but we must hasten on to the head of the estuary, and thence by land to the ancient town of Haverfordwest, now a flourishing market-town, the most important in the county. Again the most striking feature is the great square-walled castle, concerning which the old Welsh historian tells an exciting adventure.

It so happened that a certain robber-chief was imprisoned in the dungeon of the castle at the time that the three young sons of the Earl of Pembroke and two children of the Governor were playing together within the walls. The game was shooting with bow and arrows, but the latter were so badly made that the youngsters began to lament that no one could make them well enough. Either through a chink in the wall, or by means of his gaoler, the prisoner conveyed the information that he was noted for the work of arrow-making, and the boys were soon his devoted admirers. One day the too confiding gaoler went off to his dinner, leaving the dungeon door with the key in the lock, that the boys might visit the interesting maker of arrows. No sooner were some of them inside, however, than the brigand locked them in with him, and threatened

ST. CATHERINE'S ROCK, TENBY

those who tried to break down the door that he would kill the children and himself unless the Governor swore to let him go free. This was done at length, in sheer despair, and the robber was allowed to depart to his lair in safety.

Haverfordwest is the nearest station to St. David's, the most famous cathedral in Wales, once the aim of many a pilgrimage, since " two journeys to St. David's shrine counted as one to Rome." And well it might, since even now there are " sixteen miles and seventeen hills " to traverse before we reach the sacred spot.

St. David's Cathedral stands remote in a somewhat desolate country, upon a strip of craggy seaboard, " the loneliest of British fanes." " We descend a narrow street paved with rough stones, we look through a little gateway on the right, and stand astonished and delighted. A wonderful prospect bursts upon us : we behold the whole cathedral rising before us in its stern majesty, with the ruins of St. Mary's College to the right, and the magnificent remains of the Bishop's palace to the left, while the dark rocks of Carn Llidi form the background to the striking picture."*

The loveliness of the building itself, its massive pillars and delicate tracery, with the grey, purple, and red colours of the sandstone from which they

* D. T. Evans, " Welsh Pictures."

are formed, make it one of the most beautiful of cathedrals ; but the most thrilling memory in connection with it is that, when most of England was still plunged in heathen darkness, a cathedral stood in this place as the Church of West Britain and the seat of an Archbishop of the Celtic Church.

The shrine of St. David, or Dewi, the Water-drinker, the patron saint of Wales, is within, and with him lies the honour of transferring the seat of the Archbishopric from its more ancient site at Caerleon in Monmouthshire to this spot. St. David, said by one legend to have been uncle to King Arthur, became famous by a miracle that occurred in the sixth century, when he addressed a great meeting of the Fathers of the early Christian Church, and laid low the false doctrines of one Pelagius, or Morgan, who was leading the Christians of Britain and other lands astray.

As the saint, then Abbot of St. Patrick's Monastery, where now stands the present cathedral, addressed a crowd composed of " the saints of Anjou, the saints of England, and of the North, of Man and Anglesey, of Ireland and Devonshire and Kent," and of many other places, a white dove descended from heaven upon his shoulder. " Upon which the ground on which he was standing," says the legend, " gradually rose under him, till it became a hill, from which his voice, like a loud-sounding trumpet,

was clearly heard and understood by all, both near and far off, seven thousand people, on the top of which hill a church was afterwards built, and stands till this day."

This happened farther north at Llandewi-brefi, but it was this miracle that placed the see of the Archbishopric to which St. David was at once raised, in Menevia, as this lonely district was called, instead of at Caerleon, thus fulfilling the prophecy of Merlin : " Menevia shall put on the pall of Caerleon."

CHAPTER XI

THE VALLEY OF THE WYE

To-day let us take a journey up the course of the Upper Wye, loveliest of Welsh rivers, from the point where it crosses the border between England and Wales.

The course of the Upper Wye begins just below the ruins of Clifford Castle, one of the many built upon the " Marches," or borderland, nominally to keep the Welshmen within bounds, actually to shelter the robber-barons who gained their livelihood by harassing the country on either side. The

grey stones of Clifford, covered now with a wealth of ivy, speak to us of that "fair Rosamond" with whom King Henry II. fell so deep in love that he took the maiden from her father's house and made her a bower at Godstow. There, as we all know, she was forced by Eleanor, his jealous wife, to drink a cup of poison, and never again saw the sunny banks of the Wye.

As the river sweeps along its curving course, the slopes of the Black Mountains rise in a broken mass of hill and dale and heathery upland. A touch of wildness distinguishes the country from the tamer fields of Herefordshire behind us, and rough hills, whitewashed farms, roofed with brown stone slabs and heavy beams, take the place of the comfortable and spacious manors of the English county.

This part of the Wye Valley, divided by the Black Mountains from that of the Usk, is, indeed, one of the most complete solitudes to be found in the country, rivalling that of Menevia itself. "What a wild little block of mountain it is, this eighty square miles of complete solitude!" says a traveller of the hill country between the two rivers. "How dark, and deep, and sombre the gorges! How silent the hills, where grouse lie fairly thick in the big tracts of heather! How striking the blush of the red sandstone against the greener slope, where the teeth or tread of hungry sheep and the down-

ward rush of streams have scarred the mountain-side !"

Presently a spur from these hills stretches out across our valley, and the river turns north-west and changes its character from a broad, easy flow to a rushing torrent, with here and there a deep salmon pool among the rocks of its course. This is a very famous part of the river from the fisherman's point of view, and few save tramps and fishermen are to be met with on the lonely valley road which we are now pursuing.

Here, at Aberedw, stands the castle which was the last refuge of the ill-fated Llewelyn, Prince of Wales, whose story we read in a former chapter. From this spot he set out to join his forces, was surprised by the English, and killed in a little wood, henceforth to be known as " the bank of the grave of Llewelyn."

The story adds that the men of Builth, close by, refused the Prince and his handful of followers a refuge on that occasion, and the curse of the " Traitors of Builth " is said to have clung for many a long day to the inhabitants.

Another lovely stretch of the river lies between Builth and Rhayader, and again the country on either side is one great solitude ; for in old days this part of Wales offered no attraction to the great border lords save as a fighting-ground between the

Men of the South and the Men of the North. It was the home, rather, of outlaws and bandits, who found good cover in its woods and highlands, and who doubtless cared as little as the English barons for the lovely river scenery amidst which they made their home.

Rhayader, whose name means "the Falls," is a typical Welsh market-town, asleep save on market and fair days, when it becomes one mass of shouting drovers, frightened cattle, buxom women with their great baskets, and gaitered farmers eagerly discussing the latest topic.

Above this town the Wye is no longer a stately river, but a straggling mountain stream, which makes its way through a wild and ever-rising country from its source in a spring on the side of Plynlimmon.

The little wedge of country, some ten miles square, which lies on its western bank and stretches away from Rhayader to the border of Cardigan, is full of weird tales and strange points of interest.

"At Llancavan a Lord of Builth, wearied with the chase, and overtaken by darkness, entered the church with his hounds and spent the night. In the morning his hounds were mad and he was blind. In his remorse for his act of sacrilege he had himself conveyed to Palestine, and there led on horseback and fully armed in the front of the fighting-line

against the Saracens, who very promptly killed him." *

Another legend says that once a miracle happened in Rhayader itself. A farmer had been seized by the owner of the castle on a charge of sheep-stealing, and was confined in the dungeon thereof. His poor wife, knowing that the gaolers were open to bribery, but having neither money nor goods, stole from the church the funeral bell, which it was the ancient custom to ring at the head of the procession to the grave. She took this to Rhayader, and offered it to the gaolers on condition that they should release her husband. But they took the sacred bell and then refused to let him go. That night, says the legend, the whole town was destroyed by fire, save only the wall of the castle on which the bell had been hung.

From Rhayader the Valley of the Elan, a tributary of the Wye, runs westward, and becomes a scene of great importance from one point of view. The valley is narrow, pent up among the hills, which fling down into it their numberless mountain streams. Here a great dam has been built, which pens up the water into two great lakes, and various smaller reservoirs, from which the city of Birmingham draws its water-supply. Fancy 60,000,000 gallons of water a day being carried to Birmingham,

* Bradley, "Highways and Byways of South Wales."

seventy miles away! These Welsh valleys certainly do their part towards keeping the great dirty manufacturing towns of England clean and sweet.

CHAPTER XII

THE GREAT PLYNLIMMON

"CARDIGAN is a country to itself," says one who knows Wales well. Except, indeed, for the towns on the coast, Lampeter, with its college, and a famous abbey in the south, the whole country has been described as a "mountain wilderness." But since some of us prefer such untrodden wastes to those parts that have become merely playgrounds for the English tourist, we will pay it a visit to-day.

At the north-eastern corner of the county stands Plynlimmon, the home of the Severn, the Wye, and many a smaller river which ploughs its way through the wild region we are traversing. And let us note, by the way, that, since railways and even good roads are unknown except on the very fringe of this district, our best method of travelling will be on foot.

Many years ago, when that delightful person, George Borrow, a native of Norfolk, made a long tour all over Wales on "Shanks's mare," seeing

THE WYE NEAR [illegible] Page [illegible]

thereby far more of the country and its people than the motor-car or railroad travellers of more modern times, he explored this part of the country very thoroughly, and this description of his visit to Plynlimmon is too good not to quote at length :

" The mountain of Plynlimmon, to which I was bound, is the third in Wales for height, being only inferior to Snowdon and Cader Idris. Its proper name is Pum or Pump Lumon, signifying the ' five points,' because towards the upper part it is divided into five hills or points.

" Plynlimmon . . . has been the scene of many remarkable events. In the tenth century a dreadful battle was fought on one of its spurs between the Danes and the Welsh, in which the former sustained a bloody overthrow. In 1401 a conflict took place in one of its valleys between the Welsh under Glendower and the ' Flemings ' of Pembrokeshire, who, angry at having their homesteads plundered and burnt by the chieftain, the mortal enemy of their race, assembled in great numbers and drove Glendower and his forces before them to Plynlimmon, where the Welshmen stood at bay, and with difficulty won a victory. . . .

" . . . I started about ten o'clock on my expedition, after making, of course, a very hearty breakfast . . . and went duly north till I came to a place among hills where the road was crossed by an angry-

looking rivulet. I was just going to pull off my boots and stockings in order to wade through, when I perceived a pole and a rail laid over the stream at a little distance above where I was. This rustic bridge enabled me to cross without running the danger of getting a regular sousing, for these mountain streams, even when not reaching so high as the knee, occasionally sweep the wader off his legs, as I know by my own experience. From a lad I learnt that the place where I crossed the water was called the ' Foot of the Red Slope.'

" About twenty minutes' walk brought me . . . near a spur of the Plynlimmon range. Here I engaged a man to show me the sources of the rivers and the other wonders of the mountain. He was a tall, athletic fellow, and had much more the appearance of an Irishman than the Welshman that he was. . . .

" After ascending a steep hill and passing over its top, we went down its western side, and soon came to a black, frightful bog between two hills. Beyond the bog, and at some distance to the west of the two hills, rose a brown mountain, not abruptly, but gradually, and looking more like what the Welsh call a slope than a mountain.

" ' That, sir,' said my guide, ' is the Great Plynlimmon.'

" ' It does not look much of a hill,' said I.

" ' We are on very high ground, sir, or it would look much higher. I question, upon the whole, whether there is a higher hill in the world. God bless Plynlimmon Mawr !' said he, looking with reverence towards the hill. ' I am sure I have a right to say so, for many is the good crown I have got by showing gentlefolks, like yourself, to the top of him.'

" ' You talk of Plynlimmon Mawr, or the Great Plynlimmon,' said I ; ' where are the smaller ones ?'

" ' Yonder they are,' said the guide, pointing to two hills towards the north—' the Middle and the Small Plynlimmon. . . . Those two hills we have just passed make up the five. That small hill connected with the big Plynlimmon on the right is called the Hill of the Calf, or Calf Plynlimmon, which makes the sixth summit.'

" ' Very good,' said I, ' and perfectly satisfactory. Now let us ascend the big Plynlimmon.'

" In about a quarter of an hour we reached the summit of the hill, where stood a large cairn, or heap of stones. I got up on the top and looked around me.

" A mountainous wilderness extended on every side, a waste of russet-coloured hills, with here and there a black, craggy summit. No signs of life or cultivation were to be discovered, and the eye might

search in vain for a grove, or even a single tree. The scene would have been cheerless in the extreme had not a bright sun lighted up the landscape.

"'This does not seem to be a country of much society,' I said to my guide.

"'It is not, sir. The nearest house is the inn we came from, which is now three miles behind us. Straight before you there is not one for at least ten, and on either side it is a wilderness to a vast distance. Plynlimmon is not a sociable country, sir; nothing to be found in it, but here and there a few sheep or a shepherd.'

"'Now,' said I, descending from the cairn, 'we will proceed to the sources of the rivers' (the Severn, the Wye, and the Rheidol). The source of the Rheidol is a small, beautiful lake, about a quarter of a mile in length. It is overhung on the east and north by frightful crags, from which it is fed by a number of small rills. The water is of the deepest blue, and of very considerable depth. The banks, except to the north and east, slope gently down, and are clad with soft and beautiful moss. The river, of which it is the head, emerges at the south-eastern side, and brawls away in the shape of a considerable brook amidst moss and rushes down a wild glen to the south. If few rivers have a more wild and wondrous channel than the Rheidol, fewer still have a more beautiful and romantic source.

" After kneeling down and drinking freely of the lake, I followed my guide over a hill into a valley, at the farther end of which I saw a brook streaming to the south.

" ' That brook,' said the guide, ' is the young Severn.'

" The brook came from round the side of a very lofty rock, singularly variegated, black and white, the northern summit presenting somewhat the appearance of the head of a horse. Passing round this crag, we came to a fountain, surrounded with rushes, out of which the brook, now exceedingly small, came murmuring.

" ' The crag above,' said my guide, ' is called the Rock of the Horse, and this spring at its foot is generally called the Source of the Severn. However, drink not of it, master, for the source is higher up. Follow me.'

" I followed him up a steep and very narrow dingle. Presently we came to some beautiful little pools of water in the turf, which is here remarkably green.

" ' These are very pretty pools, aren't they, master ?' said my companion. ' Now, if I was a false guide I should bid you stoop and drink, saying that these were the sources of the Severn ; but the true source is higher up. Don't fret, however, but follow me, and we shall be there in a minute.'

" So I did as he bade me, following him, without fretting, higher up.

" Just at the top he halted, and said : ' Now, master, I have conducted you to the source of the Severn. I have considered the matter deeply, and have come to the conclusion that here, and here only, is the true source. Therefore stoop down and drink, in full confidence that you are taking possession of the Holy Severn.'

" The source of the Severn is a little pool of water some 20 inches long, 6 wide, and about 3 deep. It is covered at the bottom with small stones, from between which the water gushes up. Turf-heaps, both large and small, are in abundance near by.

" After taking possession of the Severn by drinking at its source, I said : ' Now let us go to the fountain of the Wye.'

" The source of the Wye, which is a little pool, not much larger than the source of the Severn, stands near the top of a grassy hill which forms part of the Great Plynlimmon.

" The stream, after leaving its source, runs down the hill towards the east, and then takes a line to the south.

" The fountains of the Severn and the Wye are in close proximity to one another. That of the Rheidol stands somewhat apart from both, as if, proud of its own beauty, it disdained the other two for its homeliness."

CHAPTER XIII

THE VALE OF TEIFY

WELSHMEN call the county of Cardigan the Shire Aber Teivi, or the shire of the River Teify. The valley of this river forms the boundary between the shire and those of Pembroke and Carmarthen, and then turns north-east to the famous monastery of Strata Florida, which is well worth a visit to those who love to remember that Wales was the home of the Christian faith in days when England lay in heathen darkness.

We saw in the last chapter that Cardigan is a lonely county, cut off from its neighbours by mountains and hills all the way from Plynlimmon to Lampeter, and by steep slopes, forming the Valley of the Teify, on the Carmarthen side. Hence its position has made it in bygone days "the last refuge of the beaten and the first landing-place of returning exiles."

Its people, because of this fact, are not quite like the rest of their countrymen, but form something like a separate tribe, known to their neighbours as "Cardys." The men are generally very dark as to eyes, hair, and complexion, with "round heads, thick necks, and sturdy frames."

You remember that Borrow took his guide for an Irishman at first, and in many ways the "Cardy"

does resemble his Celtic cousin across the Channel of St. George. But he differs in the fact that he is very industrious and independent, and always on the lookout to better himself. So that, though nearly all the population is composed of small farmers and their labourers, the county is said to produce more teachers, parsons, and preachers than any other in Wales.

We have heard something already of the tremendous battles that took place in this region—battles which we can easily account for, since the loneliness of the district made it a favourite refuge for all lost causes. The story of one of these battles, the joy of the Welsh bards in the twelfth century, tell us how North and South Wales joined in 1135 in an attack upon the town of Cardigan, at the mouth of the Teify, then held by ruthless English barons, who advanced beyond the walls upon them. The advantage falling to the Welsh, the English retreated to their castle, but the Welshmen cut the supports of the bridge over the Teify as they crossed it, so that three thousand perished in the river.

"The green sea-brine of Teife thickened. The blood of warriors and the waves of ocean swelled its tide. The red-stained sea-mew screamed with joy as it floated on a sea of gore." *

* The quotation is taken from Bradley's "Highways and Byways of South Wales."

CARDIGAN BAY.

The Vale of Teify

From Cardigan the River Teify winds through a hilly country to Cenarth, whose castle is the scene of a story all too common in the days when Henry I. was King of England.

Nest, the daughter of Rhys ap Tudor, the last Prince of Wales who was actually quite independent of English rule, was the fairest maiden in all the land.

When her father died, he left her in the charge of Henry I., and the King gave her in marriage to the Norman Gerald, Lord of Pembroke, who had just built this castle at Cenarth as a protection against the hostile Welsh on both sides of the river. There he lived happily with his beautiful wife and children for some years, until Cadogan, Prince of Cardigan, took it into his head to give a great banquet at Cardigan Castle.

Now, at this feast the one topic of conversation and song was the beauty of Nest, the wife of the Norman baron, and at length the wild son of Cadogan, Owen by name, arose and declared that he would carry her off and bring her back to her own people.

So one dark night, Owen and his band of followers forced their way into Pembroke Castle, where the Earl and his wife were then living, and into the room where Gerald and Nest lay asleep.

The baron barely saved his life by escaping down

a drain, while his wife and children were carried off and the castle fired. The unhappy Nest was hidden, they say, in a romantic old house near Llangollen, and meantime all Wales was in an uproar about the ears of the daring robber.

The wrath of Henry of England fell hot upon Cadogan, who had tried in vain to persuade his son to restore his prisoner. Most of his land was taken from him by jealous neighbours as well as by the English barons of the border, and at length the turbulent Owen was forced to flee to Ireland, and Nest returned to her husband.

Many years later, says the tale, Owen returned, an outlaw, to his native land, and before very long found himself fighting in a quarrel on the same side as the injured Gerald. No sooner did the latter discover this than, mindful of the ancient feud, he sought out his rival and challenged him to single conflict, putting him at last to death. And still they show below that old manor-house at Eglyseg, the hiding-place and prison of poor Nest, the path that climbs the steep glen, and claim it to have been the way by which Owen set out upon his wild quest and returned with his terrified captives.

But we must hasten along the deep and rocky valley of our river, past the little town of Lampeter, noted for its training college for those who are going

to be clergymen, and through a fair country of meadows and hills till we turn aside to a very ancient village, with a still more ancient church. This is Llan-Dewi-Brefi, or the Church of St. David on the Brefi. We have heard of it in a former chapter, for it was the scene of St. David's triumph over the heretics in the sixth century, and the church stands on the site of that which was built in memory of that triumph on the hill which rose under him as he stood to give his message to the assembly.

The word "Brefi" means a "bellowing," and legend accounts for the name of the little stream which flows by the hill in this fashion.

Two mighty oxen were dragging stones from the river-bed wherewith to build the church, when they came to a very steep hill, up which they found it most difficult to pull the huge stone. At last, in his struggle to do so, one of the animals fell down dead. When this happened, its mate stood and bellowed nine times with force so terrific that the valley shook, and the hill fell down flat, so that the stone could be drawn easily to the site of the church. Once on a time the traveller would be shown an immense horn, said to have fallen from the head of one of these oxen, which gave its name of the "Bellowing One" to the stream below.

To the left of the Teify Valley, some miles farther up its course, lies the great Bog of Tregaron, six

miles long and one broad, and far more like an Irish bog than any other quagmire in this country.

Picture to yourself a vast flat, brownish expanse, with pools of gleaming black water here and there, dotted by hillocks formed by stacks of black turf cut from its surface. It is loneliness itself, in spite of a brown-smocked turf-cutter here and there at work ; and over it the only sound that echoes is the cry of the wild-duck, the peewit, or grouse.

Farther up still we find the Teify among the mountains, flowing in a valley, at the head of which stand the ruins of Strata Florida. Most solitary is this, perhaps, of all the lonely spots which those old Cistercian monks chose out in the wilderness, and " made to blossom like the rose."

The monastery was probably founded by Rhys ap Griffith in 1164—" My Lord Rhys, the head, and shield, and strength of the south and of all Wales," as the chronicler calls him. It became the darling of the Welsh chieftains, who showered lands and money upon the monks, until they found themselves the owners of the mountain-range above, and of most of the wide valley in which stand the ruins, and the most noted sheep-farmers in Wales.

In one of these cells was preserved the parchment, still in existence, upon which was kept, every day for one hundred and thirty years, a " chronicle " of

the Welsh history of the time, which only ends with the death of Llewelyn.

Here, too, lies buried beneath the great yew-trees of the graveyard a famous Welsh poet of the fourteenth century, named Dafydd ap Gwilym (David, son of William).

Welsh literature is full of the love-poems addressed by this poet to Morfydd, his loved one, " Maid of the glowing form and lily brow beneath a roof of golden tresses."

She was above him in birth, and was sent to a convent in Anglesey to be out of his way. Ap Gwilym, disguised as a monk, followed her to a monastery close by, but only to hear that she had been married to a husband much older than herself. In desperation the bard tried to carry her off, but was seized and thrown into a Glamorgan prison until he could pay a large fine. But his fellow-poets would not let the " chief bard of Glamorgan " languish in a dungeon ; they paid his fine, and set the prisoner free to sing again of Nature and of love.

Ap Gwilym died in the year of Glendower's revolt, still grieving for his lost Morfydd, and, with her name on his lips, passed away, and was buried under the walls of the great abbey that had sheltered his last years.

CHAPTER XIV

THE DEVIL'S BRIDGE

CENTRAL WALES is a land of hills and breezy uplands, enclosed by low mountain-ranges full of romantic gorges and hidden valleys.

It includes the north of Cardiganshire and part of the shire of Montgomery, and is famous in history as the battle-ground upon which many a struggle between the Men of the South and the Men of the North was fought out.

The first place of interest on its coast-line is Aberystwith. Here you will find the moated mound, which is all that is left of a castle, built by Gilbert de Clare, one of the barons of Henry I., to guard his newly acquired province of Cardigan or Ceredigion; the southern part being guarded by the castle we have already seen at Cardigan itself, on the mouth of the Teify.

The much more important ruins of a castle that stand near the College, and overlook the sea, are the remains of a later building in the days of Edward I.

Close by, the fine grey building of the University College brings us back to the present day, and reminds one of the fashion in which Wales, so long

supposed to be behind-hand in the march of progress, led the way by founding her own University, with noble colleges at Bangor, Aberystwith, and Cardiff, where her sons and daughters might complete the education begun in the intermediate and primary schools throughout the Principality. Not only may Wales pride herself on her University, but also on her boldness in first making the experiment of teaching boys and girls, young men and women together on precisely equal terms—an experiment in co-education which England herself has hesitated to make.

There are many interesting expeditions to be made round this pretty seaside town. Near by is Llanbadarn, the Church of St. Paternus, a Breton monk, who, in the sixth century, brought the Christian faith to this region. This church developed into a monastery in later days, and became a refuge in the twelfth century for an unusually studious Bishop of those days, who was driven from St. David's by the rough Norman barons and their favourite priests, and who found at Llanbadarn leisure and peace to write his record of the Welsh saints in older times, and to keep a valuable "chronicle," or history, of his own day.

Along the coast is Borth, and on the beach there, "between the Dovey and Aberystwith," may have been that Weir of Gwyddno, of which we read in

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the first chapter. There, you will remember, the unfortunate youth Elphin found a leathern bag with a child inside, who told him that he would be to him "in the days of his distress better than any three hundred salmon." And you shall hear now how, on one occasion alone, Taliesin, the child-bard, was as good as his word.

Elphin had been made prisoner by the cruel King Maelgwn, who cast him into a dungeon, barred by thirteen locked doors. After some attempts had been made in vain to win his freedom, Taliesin bade Elphin wager the King that he had a horse both better and swifter than the King's horses. The King accepted the challenge, promised him his freedom if he should win the race, and fixed day, and time, and place for the trial of the steeds.

When all was ready, the King went thither with all his Court and four and twenty of his swiftest horses; while Elphin could only muster a sorry nag ridden by a barefoot boy.

The course was marked out and the horses placed ready, when Taliesin came running with twenty-four sprigs of holly, burnt black, in his hand, and he bade the barefoot boy place the twigs in his belt. Then, as he did so, he whispered and bade him let all the King's horses get before him, and as each overtook him, to strike the horse with a holly-twig over the crupper, and then let that twig fall, and

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then to take another twig and do the same to every one of the horses as he was overtaken by each.

He also told the boy to watch carefully when his own horse should stumble, and to throw down his cap on the spot.

All this was done, and every one of the King's horses, when he was struck by the holly-twig, began to lag behind, so that the horse of Elphin, ridden by the barelegged boy, won the race with ease.

So the King was forced to release Elphin, and when this was done, Taliesin took his master to the spot where his horse had stumbled, and bade workmen dig a hole there, and when they had dug deep enough they found a cauldron full of gold. Then said Taliesin :

" Elphin, take thou this as a reward for having taken me out of the weir, and reared me from that time until now." So Elphin went home a rich man to his father.

Borth is not the only place in the neighbourhood which is connected with this wonderful bard of the sixth century. His grave is said to lie among the hills above the village of Taliesin, and anyone who lies in that hollow for a night alone is said to awake next morning either a poet or a madman.

Exactly the same thing is said of the man who is bold enough to spend the night on the top of Cader Idris, the home of a giant bard who is said to have

invented the harp, and which is also known to us as the second highest mountain in Wales.

If we want to take a long excursion from Aberystwith, we can visit the famous Devil's Bridge in the Plynlimmon district, which is called one of the wonders of Wales. This, of course, was visited by the indefatigable Borrow, who thus describes the spot :

" To the north, and just below the hospice, is a profound hollow, with all the appearance of the crater of an extinct volcano. At the bottom of this hollow the waters of two rivers unite—those of the Rheidol from the north, and those of the Afon - y - Mynach, or " Monk's River," from the south-east.

" The Rheidol, falling over a rocky precipice at the northern side of the hollow, forms a cataract very pleasant to look upon from the window of the inn. Those of the Mynach, or Rhyddfant, which pass under the celebrated Devil's Bridge, are not visible, though they generally make themselves heard. The waters of both, after uniting, flow away through a romantic glen towards the west. The sides of the hollow are beautifully clad with wood.

" Penetrate now into the hollow. You descend by successive flights of steps, some of which are very slippery and insecure. On your right is the Monk's

River, roaring down its dingle in five successive falls, to join its brother, the Rheidol. Each of the falls has its own peculiar basin, one or two of which are said to be of awful depth. The length which these falls, with their basins, occupy is about five hundred feet.

" On the side of the basin of the last but one is the cave, or the site of the cave, said to have been occupied in old times by the Wicked Children, two brothers and a sister, robbers and murderers. At present it is nearly open on every side, having, it is said, been destroyed to prevent its being the haunt of other evil people. . . .

" Of all the falls, the fifth or last is the finest. You view it from a kind of den, to which the last flight of steps, the ruggedest and most dangerous of all, has brought you. Your position here is a wild one. The fall, which is split in two, is thundering beside you ; foam, foam, foam is flying all about you ; the basin or cauldron is boiling frightfully below you ; grim rocks are frowning terribly above you, and above them forest trees, dank and wet with spray and mist, are distilling drops in showers from their boughs.

" But where is the bridge—the celebrated Bridge of the Evil One ?

" From the bottom of the first flight of steps leading down into the hollow you see a modern-

looking bridge bestriding a deep chasm or cleft to the south-east, near the top of the dingle of the Monk's River. That, however, is not the Devil's Bridge, but about twenty feet below that bridge, and completely overhung by it, don't you see a shadowy, spectral object, something like a bow, which likewise bestrides the chasm? You do? Well, that shadowy, spectral object is the celebrated Devil's Bridge. It is now quite inaccessible except to birds and the climbing, wicked boys of the neighbourhood. . . .

"To view it properly and the wonders connected with it you must pass over the bridge above it and descend a dingle till you come to a small platform on a crag. Below you now is a frightful cavity, at the bottom of which the waters of the Monk's River, which comes tumbling from a glen to the east, whirl, boil, and hiss in a horrid pot or cauldron in a manner truly tremendous.

"On your right is a slit, through which the waters, after whirling in the cauldron, escape. The slit is wonderfully narrow, considering its height, which is considerably over a hundred feet. Nearly above you, crossing the slit, which is partially wrapped in darkness, is the far-famed bridge, the Bridge of the Evil One—a work which, though crumbling and darkly grey, does much honour to the hand that built it, whether it was the hand of Satan or of a

monkish architect, for the arch is chaste and beautiful, far superior in every respect to the one above it.

" Gaze on these objects—the horrid seething pot or cauldron, the gloomy slit, and the spectral, shadowy Devil's Bridge for about three minutes, allowing a minute to each, then scramble up the bank, for you have seen enough.

" And if pleasant recollections do not haunt you through life of the noble falls and the beautiful wooded dingles to the west of the Bridge of the Evil One, and awful and mysterious ones of the monk's boiling cauldron, the long, savage, shadowy cleft, and the grey, crumbling spectral bridge, I say boldly that you must be a very unpoetical person indeed !" *

CHAPTER XV

THE GLOWING MOUNTAIN

Our last peep shall be taken in the busy region of South Glamorgan, where the hills and valleys present a very different scene from those amongst which we have lately wandered. For here is the home of coal—that powerful material which pro-

* Borrow, " Wild Wales."

duces the force required for most of the machinery of the world.

Above the vales of Dowlais, Neath, and Taff, over the Rhondda Valley and the towns of Merthyr Tydvil and Aberdare, hangs a perpetual smoke-cloud from the vast furnaces which are always busy smelting iron and steel from the neighbouring coal-fields, or, west of Swansea, copper imported from abroad. Some of these valleys are simply a succession of mining villages, the home of strenuous toilers who all day and all night are working their turns, or "shifts," some underground in the mines, some at the furnaces, some sending off the coal, and iron, and copper to the great port of Cardiff, or the lesser ones at Swansea or Barry.

There is nothing very picturesque about this region, although it can boast of the ruins of many strong castles, some interesting churches, and the beautiful Vale of Glamorgan—a region of meadows and grassy slopes, upon which feed fat cows and oxen to their hearts' content.

But this is, perhaps, too tame to be attractive; nor, apart from the almost terrible interest attached to all coal-mines, is there anything to keep us lingering in the blackened valleys of the district.

There is one curious feature, however, at which you will like to take a peep. Borrow, of course, found it out, and called it the Glowing Mountain.

The Glowing Mountain

He was on his way to Merthyr Tydvil when, as it began to grow dark, he came to the beginning of a vast moor. In the distance he could see weird blazes and hear "horrid sounds"; and, as he went on up hills and down dales, night set in, very black and still. Having toiled to the top of a steep ascent, he stopped to take breath, and saw a glow on all sides in the heavens except in the north-east quarter.

"Turning round a corner at the top of the hill, I saw blazes here and there, and what appeared to be a Glowing Mountain in the south-east. I went towards it down a descent, which continued for a long, long way. So great was the light cast by the blazes and that wonderfully glowing object, that I could distinctly see the little stones upon the road.

"After walking for about half an hour, always going downwards, I saw a house on my left hand, and heard a noise of water opposite to it. I went to the waterfall, drank greedily, and then hurried on, more and more blazes and the glowing object looking more terrible than ever.

"It was now above me at some distance to the left, and I could see that it was an immense quantity of heated matter, like lava, occupying the upper and middle parts of a hill, and descending here and there almost to the bottom in a zigzag and winding manner. Between me and the Glowing Mountain

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lay a deep ravine. After a time I came to a house. against the door of which a man was leaning.

" ' What is all that burning stuff above, my friend ?'

" ' Dross from the iron forges, sir.' "

" I now perceived a valley below me, full of lights, and, descending, reached houses and a tramway. I had blazes now all around me . . . and finally found myself before the Castle Inn at Merthyr Tydvil."

In the morning he revisits the scene.

" The mountain of dross which had startled me on the preceding night with its terrific glare, looked now nothing more than an immense dark heap of cinders. It is only when the shades of night have settled down that the fire within manifests itself, making the hill appear an immense glowing mass."

And so, with Borrow, we will turn our backs on the great Welsh coal-field, and say good-bye for the present to Wild Wales.

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